

BROAD AGENCY ANNOUNCEMENT (BAA EASC-02-0001)

COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PARTNERS INITIATIVE

May 24, 2002

A. INTRODUCTION: The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Northeast Region Office (NERO) Cooperative Research Partners Initiative (CRPI) is seeking research proposals for projects involving cooperation between members of the fishing industry and scientists. This BAA is issued under the provisions of paragraph 6.102(d)(2) of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) which provides for the competitive selection of basic and applied research proposals. Contracts awarded based on responses to this BAA are considered to be the result of full and open competition and in full compliance with the provisions of Public Law 98-396, "The Competition in Contracting Act of 1984." A new BAA may be posted following expiration of this submittal period in support of any additional or continuing agency needs.

B. BACKGROUND: In early 2001, the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences (MCCS) was commissioned by the NMFS CRPI program to conduct a series of workshops with the fishing and conservation communities in the Northeast Region. The objectives of these workshops were to: 1) discuss and document issues surrounding bycatch, discard, and conservation engineering technologies in New England; 2) bring fishermen's unique experience and expertise more directly into the science and management arena; 3) determine ways to develop research partnerships among fishery participants, marine scientists and fisheries managers; 4) encourage fishermen to participate in cooperative research and use their vessels as research platforms; 5) encourage creative thinking in the development of more selective and lower impacting fishing gears; and 6) most importantly, list local and regional research priorities aimed at mitigating bycatch and discard of New England groundfish. Some specific research topics discussed at these meetings included:

- Document biological and economic benefits of using larger mesh sizes of 6 ½ to 7 inches or greater
- Document reaction and behavior of key species to various fishing gear and practices
- Address gear selectivity issues through gear modifications, changes in fishing practices and various other fishery input factors
- Implement studies to understand survivability of discarded fish or benthic organisms which come in contact with fishing gear
- Develop outreach and education programs coordinated with bycatch reduction research programs

Though these research topics were generally discussed at many of the MCCS port meetings, they do not represent the totality of topics discussed or potential cooperative conservation engineering research needs. You are encouraged to review the MCCS report which can be accessed on the Northeast Regional Office web page (<http://www.nero.nmfs.gov/ro/doc/da.htm>) by selecting "Final Report - Proceedings of a series of port meetings with the fishing industry (New England 2001), Bycatch, Discard & Conservation Engineering Issues" or requesting a copy from Nick Anderson (978) 281-9383 or nick.anderson@noaa.gov.

C. OBJECTIVE: (1) Technical Description: This BAA solicits research proposals for projects that relate to conservation engineering, documenting and mitigating bycatch mortality and environmental impacts, and fishing gear selectivity affecting the Northeast Multispecies fishery as defined by the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) or discussed in the MCCA report described above. To encourage research ideas from fishermen as well as from scientists, CRPI is seeking proposals that state succinctly the mutually agreed upon objectives and benefits of projects. Proposals should identify resources that are available to the applicants and list other resources that are requested from the CRPI funding. Subsequent requests for proposals addressing broader-based cooperative research efforts through the CRPI will follow later in the year. Two very different types of projects will be considered for funding:

Type 1:

This type will seek well-structured experiments with scientifically robust methods, which provide information on fishing gear selectivity, fishing gear effects, and interactions with marine habitats. Projects ranging from \$50K to \$400K will be funded.

Type 2:

These are smaller projects that test or demonstrate highly innovative concepts for gear design or fishing methods. They should be approached as feasibility studies (proof of concept) of untested fishing technologies which address species or size selectivity, bycatch mitigation and reduction of environmental impacts. Creative thinking is encouraged for ideas that may lead to more scientifically rigorous experimentation in the future. Projects may be funded in a range from \$5K to \$50K, depending on the number of projects recommended for funding after evaluation.

On an individual proposal basis, some projects may offset the total cost of the project by incorporating the sale of the catch into the proposal. Projects must clearly explain their request for retention of the catch including use of days-at-sea (DAS) and accounting for the sale of the catch. If research is to be conducted outside the coverage of fishing regulations, an Exempted Fishing Permit may be required. Additionally, anticipated experimental permits should be specified. In such situations, applicants are strongly urged to contact the Sustainable Fisheries Division (978) 281-9315 at the NMFS Northeast Regional Office in advance of proposal submission. Additionally, applicants may access Experimental Fishing Permit (EFP) application materials on the NMFS web pages <http://www.nero.nmfs.gov/ro/doc/600745.htm> or <http://www.nero.nmfs.gov/ro/doc/initialapp1.htm> (then select "Exempted Fishing Permit").

Based on the ideas in the second category of research proposals, NMFS may request some proposal respondents to further develop a "proof of concept" proposal with assistance from highly trained or experienced persons familiar with similar or applicable technologies. Alternatively, NMFS may contract the proposal author to convene a team to develop the ideas further.

(2) Project Requirements: The objective of these projects is to encourage cooperative research among fisheries managers, scientists, and industry members. Specific activities may vary with each project, but all projects will require the following elements:

- Ensure that scientists and fishermen are involved in both the planning and the execution of the project.
- Ensure that scientists and fishermen work together to conduct or oversee the execution of the research project.
- Provide administrative or other necessary support for the project, train and equip personnel in onboard safety, and ensure adequate communication with NMFS.
- Provide adequate insurance coverage during research days at sea.
- Provide interim progress reports, facilitate project evaluation through site visits, and submit a final report in accordance with a schedule negotiated with NMFS. Final reports will be required to pass a critical review and incorporate modifications according to review results. Additionally, final reports and data access portals will be posted on a cooperative research internet web site for public access.

D. PROPOSAL SUBMISSIONS: Research proposals must be postmarked or received by 5:00 PM, Monday, July 8, 2002 and submitted to two locations: Submit one original to: Department of Commerce/NOAA, Eastern Administrative Support Center, Attention: Michelle Morales, 200 Granby Street, Suite 815, Norfolk, Va 23510. Submit two (2) copies to: Nick Anderson, Office of Cooperative Programs Coordination, NMFS/NERO, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Proposals will be reviewed by a technical review panel convened by NMFS. There will be separate evaluation criteria for each of the two proposal categories described above. Based on this review, NMFS may:

- (1) Invite the proposal author to enter into negotiations for a potential contract award.
- (2) Recommend appropriate teaming arrangements among the fishing industry, scientists and fisheries managers, and/or negotiate a broader based research project;
- (3) Fund the proposal as presented without modifications or negotiations; or
- (4) Choose not to fund the proposal.

Proposals shall include the following at a minimum, but are not limited to these elements. In terms of length, Type 2 project proposals are limited to 10 pages for items 1-9 below. Type 1 project proposals are limited to 15 pages for items 1-9 below. Item 10 submissions are not included in the page limitation.

1. Project Summary
2. Project goals and objectives
3. Value of project to fishery conservation and management

4. Statement of work
 - a) Project design
 - b) Vessel and equipment needs
 - c) Personnel
 - i. personnel resources already available (identify persons involved in the development of the proposal)
 - ii. industry participation (tentative letters of commitment from fishermen, vessel owners, or other key industry participants)
5. List of equipment, facilities and infrastructure contributed by project participants or organizations.
6. Estimated time line of project including: a) start date, b) milestones, and c) completion date including submission of deliverables
7. Expected products and specific deliverables
8. Estimated budget to conduct the project
9. Contact information
10. Supporting documentation: Resumes, cooperative research agreements, contracts, etc.

E. PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA: Proposals will be evaluated based on the degree to which proposals address the following factors. A score of 0 to 10 (10 being the highest achievable score) will be assigned to each factor listed below.

I. Research Value:

Type 1 Full-scale proposals:

- Improves data available for management
- Addresses an immediate need for bycatch information or information on environmental impacts
- Contributes to a long-term strategy to rebuild and sustain stocks
- Clearly defines the problem it addresses
- Clearly describes how the project will achieve its stated objectives
- Offers practical solutions to management concerns
- Applicants' facilities, equipment, and infrastructure proposed for this project are listed
- NEFMC priority research needs addressed*

*NEFMC Priorities:

- *Evaluate discard, bycatch, and non-catch mortality rates; initiate special studies under experimental design protocols to calculate gear interaction or discard rates. Bycatch encompasses all species, including marine mammals such as harbor porpoise.*
- *Obtain detailed information on fishing power (related to capacity and catchability issues)*
- *Identify and compare/contrast impacts to a variety of habitat types (mud, sand, gravel, cobble, rock, boulder) associated with roller and rockhopper trawl gear of the various sizes used in New England fisheries.*

- *Develop and demonstrate the practical use of otter trawl, scallop dredge, and other fishing gear designs that have significantly less contact or impact on the sea bottom (benthos) than gear in current use by New England fishermen.*

Type 2: Small-scale projects to test an idea

Demonstrates a highly innovative idea for development of new fishing technologies or fishing practices to improve selectivity or mitigate habitat impact

- Test an innovative or alternative approach that addresses management research priorities
- Offers practical solutions that dovetail well with current management challenges
- The project is technically appropriate
- The study design is adequate
- List all facilities, equipment, and infrastructure needed to accomplish the project

II. Collaborative value for both types:

- The project promotes collaboration between fishermen and scientists
- Involves a strong research partnership that is highly likely to succeed
- Involves a high degree of pro-active participation by fishermen in the design and conduct of research
- Provides compensation to fishermen
- Addresses fishermen's interests or concerns

III. Cost: Cost data will be evaluated for realism and reasonableness.

F. QUALIFICATIONS: Any U.S. citizen may submit a research proposal under this BAA. Note that NMFS expects that the primary operations center of anyone receiving a contract under the cooperative research program will be located in the New England region. Any entity or individual which is delinquent in its obligations under a previously funded research project will be considered ineligible to participate in this research program. "Delinquent" means that the entity or individual has failed to submit progress or final reports in accordance with the contract provisions of its earlier contract.

Questions or comments regarding proposed projects described in this notice should be directed to Nick Anderson, who can be reached at the following address/numbers: Nick Anderson, Office of Cooperative Programs Coordination, National Marine Fisheries Service/NERO, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930, (978) 281-9383; FAX number (978) 281-9371. E-mail inquiries may be made to: nick.anderson@noaa.gov.

G. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: **ONE STAGE PROCESS: In a departure from previous years, projects submitted in response to this announcement will be evaluated on the basis of one full proposal submission made in response to this solicitation. NO SECONDARY CALL FOR FULL PROPOSALS BASED UPON PRELIMINARY PROPOSALS OR CONCEPT PAPERS WILL BE MADE.**